

Know the Options: Guardianship Alternatives

MY CHILD IS TURNING 18. THEY HAVE A DISABILITY. DO I NEED TO GET A GUARDIANSHIP?

An adult does not need a guardian just because they have a disability.

A guardian is only needed if an adult with intellectual or cognitive challenges cannot access food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or have other essential needs met, even with help..

Guardianship alternatives help your adult child keep their rights and work toward independence, while allowing them to receive the support that they need as they are transitioning into adulthood.

There are a lot of ways to help a person who has disabilities without becoming their guardian:

- If they receive Social Security, and need help with managing money, you can ask to be appointed as their representative payee.
- If they need help with Medicaid, they may be able to appoint you as their authorized representative.
- If they need help making choices, getting information or understanding their options, they may be able to sign a supported decision making agreement.
- If they want you to continue to make decisions for them in certain situations, they can choose you to be their agent in a durable power of attorney.

Just because someone tells you that your child with a disability needs a guardianship, does not mean that they do. There are many alternatives to guardianship and one might work for your child!

Talk to your children's special education team at school about the areas in your child's life where you think they will need help when they become an adult. You can start planning for alternatives to guardianship in your child's Individualized Education Program plan as young as 14 years old.